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THE ALDINE.

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LOVE SONGS.

IN THE STREET.

LIKE a breeze from a garden,
Made sweet with the scent
Of the fresh blooming lilacs,
She came and she went;

Pure spirit and vision,
Felt rather than known,
Fain would I have held her
And made her my own;

But as the unconscious
Breeze blesses and goes,
So went she, more blessing
And blest than she knows.

IN THE GARDEN.

WHEN lilacs were in blossom,
And all the air was sweet,
I saw her standing tip-toe
Upon a garden-seat;

One hand drew down the clusters,
The other bent a spray,
Held it a little minute
And let it slip away.

Lilacs, your life is lengthened,
But you've missed the very best,
The best brief life of lying
And dying on her breast!

TILL DAYBREAK.

AWAY to her, fresh morning breeze,
Uplift and blow aside
Her snowy curtain, and with ease
Approach her undenied.

And lightly kiss her mouth and eyes,
And lightly lift her hair,
And blow about her where she lies
This scent that fills the air,

Of apple-blossoms sweet, that she
May, waking, long to know
What newly-flowering shrub or tree
Sweetens the morning so,

And past the cloudy curtain there
Lean forth, perhaps, to see,
Sweet, fresh and fair, and unaware,
Be seen herself by me!

TILL MOONRISE.

'Tis long, long after sunset,
And cloudless is the sky,
Yet strangely faint the stars are,
And strangely faint am I;

Behind the hiding mountain
They know the moon is near;
And shining at her window
Soon will my Love appear.

—Robert Kelley Weeks.

HAL'S MISTAKE.

THERE were three of us, only, from Hilltop, a little quaint, irregular village, nestled high among the mountains—Hal Brainard, John Hazard, and I, Harrison Grey, at your service. We messed together, and that morning as we drank our black coffee we talked matters over with no sense of restraint. The regiment, which had been in camp for a month, was to march the next day.

"I shall be glad enough to get out of this," said John. "But, by George, boys, it does seem a little tough on a fellow to have to go off without seeing the folks again. It can't be more than ten miles to Hilltop, as the crow flies"—and the speaker, he was hardly more than a boy, looked yearningly off into the blue distance.

"It's no use, my lad," answered Hal, while his resolute face clouded over. "No furloughs will be granted, I understand."

But just then our good Captain Talbot appeared at the door of the tent. He had been teacher of the High School in the town adjoining ours, and we had all been pupils of his. As we gave him the military salute, he smiled faintly.

"It is almost schooltime, boys," he said. "But, first, I want to send one of you over to Hilltop, to do an errand for me. Whoever goes can stay all night, but must report himself by eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

We looked from one to the other, in a sort of eager dismay. At last John—Jack we called him—spoke out.

"Could'n't we *all* go, Captain?"

"Not exactly," he answered, laughing. "Orders are too stringent. But settle it among yourselves; and let one of you come to my tent in an hour."

The boys in the next tent were singing "Rally Round the Flag," at the top of their voices. Some one on the other side was whistling "Home, Sweet Home" in long and lingering cadence. From the pine woods on our left, the morning breezes brought us wafts of balsamic fragrance, with now and then an odorous breath from the trailing May-flowers. How well I remember it all!

I found my voice at length.

"Let Jack go. He is the youngest."

But then I bethought me that Hal had something in Hilltop that we others had not. He had been engaged to Thyrza Harrington for nearly a year.

Glancing at him from beneath my cap, I saw a look upon his face that was half defiant, half tender. Then he caught up his gun, with a pretence of examining the lock.

"No," Jack answered quietly. "If but one of us can go, it must be Hal."

Hal looked up suddenly, his face glowing with something that was not exactly joy.

"Jack is right," I said. "It must be Hal."

He dropped his gun, and caught our hands impulsively.

"God bless you, boys," he cried. "You make me feel like a selfish brute. But it seems to me this morning that I would peril my soul's salvation for the chance of going to Hilltop."

"Hurry up, then," we both answered. "You have no time to spare."

We stood in the doorway of our tent, and watched the tall, stalwart figure as it dropped out of sight behind the hill. Then Jack turned to me with a gay smile that was somewhat belied by his drooping eyelids.

"Hal looks like a prince of the blood in his new uniform," he said, "and carries himself like one, too. What a magnificent fellow he is! But what is the matter with him, Grey? I scent trouble in the air. He is not himself, lately."

Just my own impression, also. But I did not care to discuss the matter. The day was a busy one; and when night came, we were glad to wrap ourselves in our blankets and go to sleep.

Hal returned the next morning.

"Hallo, old fellow, how's Hilltop?" cried Jack, dancing around him in a fever of impatience. "Who did you see? How are all the folks?"

He soon received a quietus in the shape of sundry packets and parcels. Then Hal turned to me.

"There's no change at headquarters, I suppose?" he said, interrogatively. "We get out of this to-day?"

I answered affirmatively.

"The Lord be praised!" he exclaimed. "I could not stand this inaction much longer, Grey;" and he fell vigorously to work, packing his knapsack.

He had not quite the air of a happy Romeo, whose lips were still warm with the kisses of his Juliet. But I had no time to puzzle over it, and by sundown we were off.

This is no war story; and it is needless to tell of our marchings and counter-marchings, our perils, our victories and our defeats. It is enough to say that we were in Virginia, that vast mausoleum of two armies, and that we three Hilltop boys had no reason to be ashamed of our record.

But through it all, and underlying all, there was something about Hal Brainard that I could not understand. He was brave, even to rashness. But it seemed to me more like the recklessness of the man who holds his life of little worth, than the bravery of him who takes it calmly in his hand, ready, if it is required of him, to offer it up in all its full, sweet completeness. One evening—it was on the eve of an engagement—I ventured to remonstrate with him.

"You are too reckless, Hal," I said. "A man has

no right to throw his life away needlessly, even in battle. Think what it would be to Thyrza, if you were to be left in some nameless grave down here."

He started as if the bullet had already found him. Whether you believe it or not, we three had messed together ever since we left Vermont; we had tramped side by side through Virginia mud; we had shared each other's rations and blankets in many a stress of danger and fatigue; but the name of Thyrza Harrington had never passed our lips since that day in camp at Brattleboro'. Hal was always reticent. He was the sort of man who held you at arm's length, if he pleased; and any subject he chose to ignore was a sealed book. He had not chosen to talk of her, and so Jack and I had been silent. But that night the spirit moved me strongly—and I spoke.

He started, as I have said, and his bronzed face flushed. But after a moment he answered quietly:

"I do not expect to be killed, Grey; for I have learned, since I came down here, that it takes a deal of ammunition to kill one man. But if I should fall, I think Thyrza would manage to endure it," he added in a low tone, as he tossed a pebble into the road with the toe of his boot.

"Manage to endure it!" I cried. "What do you mean, Hal? Is she not your promised wife?"

"I—suppose—so," he answered slowly, "according to the letter of the law. But what is the letter good for when the spirit is gone? What is the body worth without the soul?"

The flush had faded, and he was pale as a ghost.

"I am sure you are beside yourself, Hal," I said, laying my hand upon his arm; "but it will do you good to break the silence in which you have wrapped yourself. Make a clean breast of it, man, for your soul's sake. What is the trouble with you and Thyrza?"

"Trouble enough," he answered, doggedly. "I have reason to believe that she made a mistake in engaging herself to me. If I should happen to be picked off by one of these infernal bullets," he added, grimly, "it would be a fortunate circumstance. It would set her free, you see, without any fuss."

There was a stern compression of his lips, a metallic hardness to his voice. Yet Hal Brainard's nature was brave, tender, and womanly. I probed him with questions as a surgeon probes a wound.

"And you," I asked, "have you made a mistake, too?"

"If she be not fair to me,
What care I how fair she be,"

he quoted lightly. Then, as if some wave of feeling swept over him, tearing his pride from its moorings, he seized my hand in a vice-like grasp.

"I love her!" he cried, "whether I have made a mistake or not. I have loved her all my life long. I do not even know when I began to love her. That's the worst of it, Harrison Grey."

We were silent for awhile. The sun dropped lower and lower, and the soft twilight wrapped us in its tender folds. I knew I should hear the whole story, if I had patience to wait for it; but Hal Brainard was not one to be hurried.

"I do not know that I blame her," he said, at last. "The truth is, Grey, Thyrza and I are too unlike. I am no mate for her. She is gay, bright and airy, full of sudden sparkles and flashes, that dazzle and bewitch me out of my senses. But I cannot follow her. I cannot keep pace with her flights. I cannot half comprehend her. There is something in her life which my life cannot grasp. And then she looks at me with a vague, reproachful wonder in her eyes, which is too much for my philosophy. She is a skylark, and I a clod."

"But admitting your comparison for a moment," I said, "skylarks build their nests upon the solid ground. Did it never occur to you that your hardy, rugged strength might be more to Thyrza Harrington than all the brilliant parts, all the merely æsthetic cultivation, in the world? Besides, there is a certain sort of knowledge—whether it comes by intuition or otherwise, that women gain earlier than men."

Hal shook his head.

"All very well in the abstract," he remarked, "but, you see, it does not touch this case. What is a man to do when he sees that the woman who has promised to marry him feels deficiencies in him, and when he knows that his failure to meet the wants of her nature, and to give full sympathetic recognition to what she regards as best and highest in herself, is a constant trouble to her? Tell me that."

I was silent, trying to think what I should say—